/101 cont./

756 764 789 The mourning son of the deceased, with a bamboo rice basket hanging from his waist, and the sorcerer stand beside the body. While the sorcerer utters spells, he points his straw sword in his right hand first toward the body of the deceased, then to the basket of the son, back and forth, until he has finished uttering the spell. With his left hand the son pulls the fingers of the dead, and with the right hand he scrapes these fingers with a thin slice of bamboo several times and then drops the bamboo into the basket. Meanwhile the priest continues his incantations. After the righthand fingers of the dead man have been scraped, his lefthand fingers are given the same treatment until the incantations are completed. After the Miao sorcerer finishes his performance, another guest sorcerer is invited to come chant a liturgy and "buy water." On the gate, in Chinese [177] fashion, there is pasted a strip of white paper, on which are written the three characters Tang Ta Shih /"carrying out the important matter" — a parent's funeral/. Messengers are sent 763 to announce the death to clan members in distant places. When the clan members receive the news and come to offer 764 condolences, there is no set ritual of condolence, but the family 606 of the daughter-in-law must give a pig's head, a piece of pork, a large jar of rice, as well as incense, candles, paper, and firecrackers. A son-in-law must give a pig, a goat, and a tableful of fish and meat dishes, called the "yang /earthly/ feast," and a tableful of simulated fish, meat, chicken, and duck made of flour, called the "yin /spirit world/ feast," together with a number of strings of cash incense, and candles. Guests coming to offer condolences follow the same ceremony 764 as the Chinese.

[177] In the evening of the day that mourning ceremonies begin, 606 first the pig and goat presented by the son-in-law are slaughtered [782] and cooked and placed in a number of bowls, which are offered in sacrifice before the coffin. After the sacrificial ceremony, the distant paternal relatives /tsu hsiung-ti/ of the bereaved family are asked to come forward to take part in the drinking

/102 cont./

764 coffin and the women behind it. The people who carry the
604 coffin while on the way ask the deceased's son-in-law for wine
[606] to drink, without which they would not proceed. Arriving at the burial ground the "empress' relative" throws down the torch on the grave, and returns the grass sword to the host. The grave pit has already been dug by men sent ahead. Now they burn
[372] oiled hemp stalks, which is called "warming up the grave."
764 A geomancer is on hand to mark out the eight diagrams /used
787 in Chinese system of divination/ with rice at the bottom of the
[791] grave, and a cock is let down into the pit to peck at the rice,
[177] in order to divine the good and bad luck of the host's family. If the cock eats the rice on the left side, then the male members will have good luck, if on the right side, then the female members will have peace. If it eats in the center then both men and women will have luck. After the coffin is laid in the
764 pit, the geomancer, holding a sheng of white, polished rice,
791 stands at the head of the coffin and scatters the rice, making complimentary remarks. The mourning filial son and others kneel at the foot of the coffin, catch the rice in their clothes. After the burial, the geomancer holds a flat, called the "calling-back-the-soul flag," and leads the procession back, and when
[774] they arrive at the bereaved family's house, everyone puts a few grains of cooked rice in the mouth to avoid losing the soul.
764 The sorcerer, carrying a bamboo tube full of water, stands at
756 the junction of crossroads or at the main entrance and scatters water with a broom made of green grass, uttering spells, to get rid of the tainted air and to dispel evil spirits.

765 After returning from the grave and attending to the dispersal of all the relatives and friends from everywhere, the host then must provide a feast for the "torch wine and meat" men brought along by the "empress' relative." If after they have eaten again and again, the hospitality is still inadequate, often it may cause "other shoots to sprout /i.e. troubles/." and cause
[605] trouble for the host. After the meal, the paternal third cousin
[604] /?/ departs, but the "empress' relative" himself remains.

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M 593 123 had had a dispute with her husband and had fled for a few days to the house of her parents, who did not want to let her go again because they were sick and urgently needed their daughter as a worker. They wanted the daughter and the son-in-law to live with them a while. The latter, however, did not approve of this at all and heaped reproaches upon his wife. When I sent my interpreter to the husband, a young man bearly eighteen years old, in order to get his version of the story, he complained bitterly and said: "This woman is too strong for me. If we have a quarrel, she beats me! Look, you are big and strong; you could beat her. Would you not like to marry her?"

M [622] [627] With the help of the chief the dispute was finally settled in the peaceable manner of the Meau: the young woman returned to her husband, but from now on was allowed to help her parents with the work as often as they wished.

M 593 595 [177] [606] The position of young Meau wives has been strongly influenced by the Chinese and from our point of view is not very enviable. She has to show unquestioning obedience, first of all to her mother-in-law, secondly to her own husband, and thirdly to her father-in-law. If her husband has already married several wives, she must also obey all of them, as has already been mentioned. The only prospect she has is that eventually, when her husband has built his own house /108/ and the other wives who preceded her have died, she may occupy the coveted position of the nă thǒ. As soon as her husband has built his own house, the position of the young wife improves, for at that moment her obligation to obey her mother-in-law ceases. In view of the aforementioned compatibility of the Meau within the family community, however, the members of a household community generally get along very well. Unhappy wives are rare, I am inclined to say much rarer than in Europe. The daily work required in the struggle for survival leaves the people little time to worry about superfluous matters.

M [606]

A 595 [606] [422] Among the Akha, although the mother-in-law does not play such an important role in the life of the young woman, the first and therefore the chief wife of a husband enjoys all the more authority. All the wives wedded later must obey her unquestioningly; all the household furnishings, and sometimes